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ABSTRACT

This study describes three cases which illustrate the experiences of three teams of elementary teachers engaged in implementing a new district-developed U.S. History unit. This district-created unit was written by a small group of teachers under the supervision of a district curriculum specialist. Each of the three teams studied varied in their involvement in writing the unit and their familiarity with teaching the unit. Interview and document data were analyzed both within and across cases resulting in the three findings that make sense of the teams' curriculum encounters. These teams' encounters with the curriculum were impacted by: (1) the congruency between the teachers' perceived role in implementing the new curriculum and their actual role as curriculum implementors; (2) the congruency between the new curriculum and their collective beliefs about how children learn; and (3) the level of frustration experienced by these teacher teams as structures were imposed to orchestrate fidelity in implementation. These cases describe the encounter each team had with the new curriculum and offer assertions that focus on the micro-politics of grade-level teams, suggestions for curriculum leaders, and the role of teacher personal practical knowledge in the curriculum implementation process. (Contains a table of data and 23 references.) (Author/BT)

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Running Head: THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURES, ROLES, AND BELIEFS

THE TEACHER CURRICULUM ENCOUNTER: THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURES, ROLES, AND BELIEFS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW AMERICAN HISTORY SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

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Abstract

The three cases described in this study illustrate the experiences of three teams of elementary teachers engaged in implementing a new district developed American History Unit. This district-created unit was written by a small group of teachers under the supervision of a district curriculum specialist. Each of the three teams studied varied in their involvement in writing the unit and their familiarity with teaching the unit. Interview and document data were analyzed both within and across cases resulting in the three findings that makes sense of the teams' curriculum encounters. These teams' encounters with the curriculum were impacted by: 1) the congruency between the teachers' perceived role in implementing the new curriculum and their actual role as curriculum implementors, 2) the congruency between the new curriculum and their collective beliefs about how children learn, and 3) the level of frustration experienced by these teacher teams as structures were imposed to orchestrate fidelity in implementation. The cases describe the encounter each team had with the new curriculum and offer assertions that focus on the micro-politics of grade level teams, suggestions for curriculum leaders, and the role of teacher personal practical knowledge in the curriculum implementation process.

For over two decades curriculum literature has been showered with articles, critiques, and reviews focused on issues of curriculum deliberation and implementation. Many of these reviews recognize that both curriculum deliberation and curriculum implementation are a part of the daily work of classroom teachers placing the teacher in the role of curriculum decision maker (Elbaz, 1991). Fullan (1982) believes implementation requires teachers to develop the meaning of the change for themselves and their students. All teachers must go through this process which often requires changes in teaching behavior, as well as changes in beliefs, attitudes, and understandings. This implementation process involves teachers in learning new roles and unlearning old roles. Each of these changes is experienced uniquely by each teacher and these changes occur at different paces.

Since during the implementation phase, neither familiarity nor prior experience exists, the curriculum change is often dominated by the teacher's need for clarification and exploration of the curriculum itself as well as the new roles they will assume. Rulcker (1991) adds that successful curriculum implementation necessitates three conditions. First, the development of curricula should involve direct collaboration with teachers in schools. Second, the curriculum change effort should begin with the concrete issues of teaching and learning. Third, curriculum change should be interactive. This third phase suggests that the implementation process of new curriculum initiatives should be dynamic, flexible, and open for discussion. Rulcker suggests that when these three conditions are met, then the phases of development and implementation begin to blur.

Schwab (1978) recognized long ago that the curriculum field neglected the role of the teacher and relied far too heavily on an uncritical reliance on theory and an inability to

offer help with problems experienced by those working in the field. Schwab provides this argument:

> The stuff of theory is abstract or idealized representation of real things. But curriculum in action treats real things, real acts, real teachers, real children, things richer than and different from their theoretical representations. Curriculum will deal badly with its real things if it treats them merely as replicas of their theoretic representations. If, then, theory is to be used well in the determination of curricular practice it requires a supplement. It requires arts, which bring a theory to its application. (1978, p.310)

Implicit in this argument is the fact that teachers must be the artists involved in the process of debate, deliberation, and choice. Following in the same line, Doyle and Ponder (1977) recognized the key role the teacher plays in using curriculum and ultimately the fate of any implementation program:

> Any curriculum proposal, regardless of its merits, will have little impact on schooling until it is used. But the weight of experience suggests strongly that it has been far easier to propose new curricula or ways to implement new proposals than it has to accomplish curriculum implementation. In an attempt to come to grips with this rather consistent failure to change curriculum practice, analysts have recently focused on processes that occur during implementation. (P.74)

A curriculum proposal only has potential to be effective if it is used. Doyle and Ponder also highlight the role of the context where curriculum deliberation and implementation

occur and remind curriculum developers the importance of considering not only the classroom teacher but the ecology of the context as well.

Although there has been a proliferation of articles addressing issues of curriculum deliberation and implementation, these articles typically tell the story of deliberation and implementation at a theoretical or conceptual level (Harris, 1986; Knitter, 1985; Reid, 1979; Roby, 1985) without a clear understanding of the processes experienced by teachers at the classroom level. University faculty functioning as researchers or curriculum specialists working in public schools typically tells these stories. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) discuss the importance of understanding the involvement of teachers in curriculum making through narrative inquiry or their stories. They conceptualize teachers as "curriculum makers" highlighting the key role teachers play in curriculum. In fact, they discuss the relevance of teacher practical knowledge in curriculum deliberation and implementation. Since curriculum deliberation is an approach to practice, the stories that need to be told are at the practical level and these stories take place in the minds and practice of teachers.

Doyle and Ponder (1977) also discuss the importance of curriculum at the practical level as they conceptualized an ethic of practicality based on adapting rather than adopting curriculum and the process includes the consideration of three concepts: instrumentality, congruence, and cost. They suggest that research needs to focus on the classroom teacher as user of curriculum and the ways teachers react and implement curriculum proposals. In fact, Doyle and Ponder highlight the tension between what a curriculum proposal means to the developers and what it means to the teachers who are responsible for implementing the proposed curriculum.

Understanding the process of curriculum implementation for teachers becomes even more complex as collaboration and teaming become more visible and culturally embedded ways of doing business in schools. Specifically, collaboration and interaction between teachers who work in teams around issues of curriculum implementation necessitates an understanding of the micro-politics of these teams within the larger organization. Hoyle (1982) describes micro-politics as "those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (p.88). Still missing from the literature is the way that teachers, who work as part of instructional teams are influenced by micro-political issues as these teachers deliver proposed curriculum.

This study raises the voices and experiences of teachers working in teams by presenting their stories of curriculum implementation that center around a single curriculum encounter. These stories capture the way a single newly developed social studies curriculum unfolds and how the teaching teams make sense of the new curriculum in their own context. By beginning with the stories of these teacher teams, their unsolicited yet highly present deliberative and implementation curriculum discourse is contextualized within their school, team, and classroom work. As the implementation stories of these three teams unfold, each of these teacher teams encounters the new social studies curriculum and experiences change in unique ways. The purpose of this study is to capture these unique experiences as the teams encounter the new curriculum. These encounters allow us to explore the following questions: What is the experience like for these teams of teachers as they try to implement a new "teacher developed" social studies curriculum? How do teacher beliefs, attitudes, and roles affect the implementation

process? And what guides teachers' decisions regarding how to implement the curriculum?

Research Methodology

Description of Curriculum Context

Over two decades ago, Schwab (1983) recommended that curriculum deliberation and curriculum development be done by a group comprised of advocates from each commonplace, which includes teachers, under the leadership of a chairman charged with balancing the various concerns. Teachers collaborating to develop units, as a mode of teaching elementary social studies acknowledge the importance of teacher participation in curriculum development. Through this work, the teacher is able to provide practical knowledge for the instructional activities suggested (Connelly, 1972), as well as begin to construct meaning about that curriculum task, facilitating the journey toward successful implementation.

In this study, three teams of teachers were asked to implement a new social studies curriculum in a district where units, described as "home-made textbooks," are developed by teachers to integrate language arts and social studies. A writing team whose membership consisted of elementary classroom teachers under the leadership of a curriculum specialist developed this unit. This writing team built a curriculum based on district objectives and national social studies standards for other teachers who were then asked to implement the unit. Thus, even though the curriculum is written by a select group of teachers from within the district, the ultimate determinant of the extent to which this implementation occurs requires broad teacher acceptance of the curriculum across the district. Understood is the fact that just because this curriculum has been developed by

teachers, it does not mean that implementation occurs as planned. In fact, Rulcker (1991) suggests that "specialist commissions composed of teacher specialists can stand out in just as sharp a contrast to the foundation as can groups of academics (p.286)."

In order to more fully understand the curriculum implementation work of these teachers, a description of the curriculum approach and unit follows. The design of the overall elementary social studies framework in this district is based on the following assumptions about learning:

1. Learning is a holistic process.
2. Learning is an active and interactive process.
3. Conceptual understanding is built on repeated contact with a variety of real people, places, and events. (Documentation, p.1)

Based on this approach, the district supports the development of units that integrate language arts and social studies curriculum. The following description defines the district's approach to social studies curriculum:

> The district believes that children should make connections between what they already know and what they are learning through curriculum that is integrated. The social studies curricula are based on core units of study that integrate the teaching of language arts skills through the content and processes of social studies. For example, through the study of American History, students might read literature about important people from many different periods of U.S. history and then write letters to these people about historical events. (Documentation, p.1)

Later in the documentation, the developers share the following insights about how to implement this unit:

> The unit lessons represent one way to develop the historical concepts addressed in a chapter. All the lessons are written for a generic 5th year class of children. You may need to modify the lessons to reflect your own teaching style and/or the needs of your particular group of children. In fact, what might work well one year with one class may need to be adapted to meet the needs of another group of children the following year. The "After" section of many of the lessons includes several choices for you and your children and offers possibilities for change from year to year and from teacher to teacher providing for a more stimulating and flexible experience for both teachers and children. (Documentation, p.15)

Although this documentation suggests a flexible approach to curriculum implementation, more details will be provided in Team One and Team Two's encounter that suggests the existing culture of curriculum implementation within this district, within certain schools, or within teaching teams may not share this same perspective.

Data Collection

This exploratory study employed a descriptive case study methodology as presented by Merriam (1988). The unit of analysis was individual teams of elementary teachers who work within a progressive school district in the northeastern United States. These teams were selected using a "unique case selection" procedure that encourages groups to be selected based on a unique attribute inherent in the population (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). The first teacher team was selected because the team was struggling to accept, adjust, and implement the new social studies curriculum. The second teacher team was selected because the teachers voiced a comfort level with implementing the

unit. The third teaching team was selected because one teacher on the team was a member of the curriculum development committee and another teacher had experience piloting the unit. In each of the three cases, the building administrators endorsed the team's participation and each team volunteered to participate as a means of sharing their own story or experience. Because of this researcher's prolonged engagement and established relationship with each of the three teams prior to this study, a heightened level of trust and openness existed as the participants reflected on their curriculum experiences. Additionally, because of the researcher's prolonged engagement in the culture and lives of teachers within this district, evidence exists that demonstrates that each of these teachers are known by their colleagues to be exceptional and committed professionals.

Each team participated in a semi-structured interview focusing on the following three questions: 1) Could you describe your experience in implementing the unit? 2) How did you implement this curriculum? And 3) What were the challenges and strengths of the curriculum implementation process? In order to obtain data, the following interview procedures were used.

1. The length of the interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes, allowing time to explore questions in depth.
2. Interviews were conducted privately with no interruptions.
3. Teachers were assured of anonymity in the reporting of their responses.
4. Probing questions encouraged teachers to expand on their responses and encouraged all team members to participate. These questions focused on events that were poignant to the teachers' work lives.
5. The interviews were tape-recorded, allowing the researcher to concentrate on the teachers' responses and ask probing questions.

The tape recordings of each interview were then transcribed allowing for accurate reporting of the teachers' responses and enabled the researcher to interpret specific responses in the context of the entire transcript. Rist (1982) describes a good interview:

> In the broadest sense, to conduct a good interview is to hold an interesting conversation…Ideas and perceptions are exchanged, information shared, and participants come to know more about each other in the process." (p. 443)

In this case, because of the informality and the open-endedness of the interview process, the group interview evolved naturally into an interesting conversation between all of the team members and the researcher as they took the time to reflect on their individual and collective experiences. The conversations with these teacher teams focused on their personal and professional concerns about the unit and the implementation process. In addition to the interview data, documents examined for this study include the district social studies program structure and the social studies unit itself.

Data Analysis

In the constructivist tradition, this study is based on research assumptions which include an emergent design, a context-dependent inquiry, and inductive data analysis. Data analysis consisted of many readings and rereadings to identify themes (Patton, 1990) that emerged from within each team's curriculum experience. Specifically, a constant comparison approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used to look for themes within each team's story. After completing the analysis of each case, data analysis continued in an effort to build an understanding of curriculum implementation across the three teams and offer a series of assertions about the curriculum work of these teachers. The curriculum

documentation was included in order to contextualize the analysis. These documents were used in juxtaposition with interview data to embed the analysis and outline the unit's intended focus, philosophy, and the perspectives of those who participated in writing the unit.

What will follow is a brief description of each team, the details of their unique curriculum encounter, and the findings that summarize how they respond to the proposed change. However, before describing each team and their unique encounter with this social studies curriculum, the reader should understand that each team worked with the same district provided curriculum guide, the same curriculum specialist, and the same curriculum materials. As these stories are told each of the three teams encounter and implement this new curriculum in profoundly different ways.

Team One: "We struggled through the year!"

This team of three teachers struggled throughout the entire year to implement this unit as written. The team was comprised of teachers who varied in their years of experience teaching fifth grade. Their story begins:

> Here it is, week 1, week 2, week 3, week 4. Then we are told we don't have to do all of it. Now isn't this pretty much put out like you're to be doing it all and in a certain way? Now we are told that we don't have to do it like this but it is formatted like we are suppose to do it day by day by day. So, I don't think this is clear and it led to our confusion. We were feeling that we had to do everything in here. (Interview, B.E., #1-5)

Due to the format or structure of the unit, these teachers felt an expectation existed for them to implement the curriculum as it was written even when the curriculum specialist

told them that they did not have to do it all. These teachers understood their role in implementing this curriculum as consistent with the fidelity approach described by Fullen and Pomfret (1977). They felt that their success would be measured by others based on the degree to which the new curriculum was implemented as intended. Their confusion in understanding their role in the implementation process continues:

> We were originally told at the first inservice that we were to try to teach the unit as it is written. Give it a chance, go through it. You can't really be critical of it or you can't give feedback unless you have tried the activities. The latest thing that we heard when we tried to voice our concerns about doing all these activities is well we never meant for you to do everything that is in there. You will drive yourself crazy trying to do everything and every activity. (Interview, B.E., #9-13)

These teachers indicate that they received conflicting messages regarding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation process from not only the structure and format of the unit, but the curriculum developers as well.

Although the objectives and content of this unit are not critical to understanding this process of curriculum implementation, an understanding of the structure, timetable, and format may be helpful in understanding the implementation challenges faced by these teachers. The following excerpt is drawn from the preface of the unit:

> The suggested timetable is designed for a 180-day school year and a five day week. Scheduled interruptions during the week such as teacher inservice days, holidays, etc. should not be counted as you plan your activities. For example, the Thanksgiving holiday creates a three-day

> week. The unit activities for that week should be carried over into the week following Thanksgiving. (Documentation, p.14)

A timetable presented in the unit includes the number of weeks that should be attributed to the preface and each of the following six chapters. Furthermore, the unit details each chapter's name, time frame, and daily lessons. The lessons typically include a purpose statement, materials, time estimate, teacher preparation, and procedures to be followed. The table of contents for each chapter outlines the lessons by day. For example, the table of contents in the preface outlines the activities for Day One:

> Day One
>
> - Introducing the unit to the students: What's the year all about?
> - Focus read aloud- (Title of Book), Book 1, Chapter 1
> - The class meeting: (Topic of Discussion Stated)
>
> (Unit Documentation, p. 37)

Along with this detailed unit implementation outline, the following messages are given in the documentation regarding implementation:

> Particular attention was given to these objectives as the unit was written so that as students move through the unit they should have many opportunities to be taught these concepts through the lessons and activities the unit has to offer. (Unit Documentation, p.35)

This level of specificity in the structure of the unit, contributed to this team's understanding that their role was to implement the unit as written. One of the teachers adds the following:

> We have these volumes of curriculum so that it would be so clearly spelled out that a brand new person in the district could pick this up, understand

> exactly what they were to do, verbatim, and understand that this is what everyone is doing here. (Interview, B.E., #243-247)

Once again, the specificity and structure of the unit communicated to these teachers the message that the unit should be implemented exactly as written. Table One highlights the role of structure in each of the three teams' stories. Team One's story highlights structure as a dominating factor in the implementation process.

Ben-Peretz (1990) outlines three distinctions that may be complicating these teachers' understanding of their role in implementing the curriculum. The first is the distinction between mandated and open curricula. According to Ben-Peretz, a continuum exists between these two points ranging from mandated curricula which offers no space for teacher participation to an open curricula which can be self-initiated. This team of teachers is experiencing role ambiguity because they are not clear about where they are on this continuum. Ben-Peretz draws a second line of distinction between structured-sequential and unstructured-modular curriculum materials. Fully developed curriculum packages are structured, sequential and organized according to a hierarchy of activities whereas unstructured curricula might be a set of loosely organized concepts. Clearly, this unit had taken on a structured-sequential appearance yet the curriculum leadership's perspective seems to waiver on this issue. Ben-Peretz (1990) also highlights a distinction can also be made between detailed and general forms of curriculum materials. Whereas detailed materials may explicate strategies and time allocations, general forms rely on teachers to fill in the gaps. The form this curriculum embodies clearly would be considered detailed. Each of these curricula distinctions influences this team of teachers understand and approach the curricula.

Since these teachers understood their role and responsibility to implement the unit as written, they experienced many conflicts between the activities and their personal beliefs about teaching and learning throughout the school year. The following excerpt provides insight into this team's beliefs about teaching and learning:

> I think my big question for this big curriculum change was who decided it would be appropriate for ten and eleven year olds to cover all of American History in one year? We keep going back to the fact that it goes against what we have heard from our administrator for all these years and that is—don't try to do too much. You're doing too much again. You need to back off and do a few things really well. Well, this is the complete opposite of that. This is do everything and do it not too thoroughly. Do everything and just touch on it. Don't worry, they will have it again. But if you relax, you can leave out a whole century. (Interview, B.E., #18-26)

These teachers share the belief with their administrator that learning occurs best when children have the time to develop deep and meaningful understandings of the curriculum. Thus, this curriculum put their beliefs about how children construct meaningful and conceptual understandings in conflict with their practice.

These teachers' perceptions of the developmental appropriateness of the curriculum also posed conflict for this team of teachers. Developmentally appropriate (Bredekamp, 1997) focuses on age and individual appropriate instruction. For example, one teacher shared:

> There were so many topics that my children couldn't get in the time I had to teach it. I am not even sure the topics were developmentally appropriate for them. Certainly not in the time I had to develop them. Like Manifest

> Destiny—most Americans don't even know what that is. (Interview, B.E., #296-300)

Another added:

> Thinking about many of the children we have, they don't get it. Even one of my top students who can read anything- she is so capable, stopped and said, I am not even sure what I just read. Now she knew all the words and did a wonderful job reading the script but what she was saying is- ask me about the content of the play and I couldn't tell you. (Interview, B.E., #318-326)

Finally, a third teacher spoke about her frustration with the choices in instructional strategies. She was particularly uncomfortable with the role of "teacher as the main dispenser of information":

> What the unit will say is you may want to read chapters one, two, ten, and eleven and then summarize this information for the children. The books are good but they are too hard for the children and the teacher becomes the vehicle for dispensing the information from the book. I am like a one-man show. But that might be just one of two or three listening activities for the day… and it is really passive for the kids. (Interview, B.E., #41-52)

These excerpts indicate the teachers' belief that the content and instructional strategies may not be appropriate for the children in their classrooms.

Fullan (1992) discusses three dimensions of educational change, the use of new materials, the use of new teaching approaches, and the alteration of beliefs. According to Fullan, "Beliefs guide and are informed by teaching strategies and activities; the effective use of materials depends upon their articulation with beliefs and teaching approaches" (p.

33). This team's story recognizes these three dimensions interacting in dynamic ways to determine the degree of curriculum implementation in their classrooms. Specifically, the materials and approaches challenge their beliefs based on personal practical knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice and meaningful conceptual learning. Table One provides a frequency count of statements made by these teachers regarding content or teaching strategies that did not fit with their beliefs about teaching and learning.

By the end of the year when the teachers finally decided that they needed to pick and choose, they shared the following feelings:

> We began to resent the fact that we are made to feel constantly behind.
>
> We are feeling guilty because we had to skip things. I mean we really had to skip things but maybe we are almost over that. (Interview, B.E. 200-206)

As a survival mechanism, these teachers had moved into an "unsupported" adaptive role of teacher as curriculum implementor. Fullen and Pomfret (1977) discuss this notion of adaptation that focuses on how the innovation is molded during the implementation process. This is a more liberal interpretation of the term *use* and emphasizes a more open process with many decisions left under the auspices of the teacher. However, even after the teachers assumed the role of adapter, these teachers continued to feel guilty about not implementing the curriculum as intended. In reflecting on the year, a teacher stated:

> I think that is what is frustrating. If we had just decided, oh we are just going to do what we want. That would have been one thing. I think the reason others are doing ok is because they are cutting somewhere. We will know what to do next year... But I figure in five years, we will come up with a plan and a scheme that we think kids will have fun with. And that

means we will be narrowing it down and rewriting. (Interview, B.E., #256-266).

This team's experience highlights how structure can challenge teacher beliefs about their own roles as curriculum implementor. For example, the tension that existed throughout this narrative points to a clash between the roles of teacher as implementor of an intended curriculum and teacher as curriculum decision-maker. In this case, due to the curriculum structures (e.g., lessons numbered Day 1, Day 2), the teachers understood their role as implementor of the intended curriculum. They tried to implement the curriculum as intended and experienced a great deal of frustration because it often didn't meet the needs of their students. However, when they decided to redefine themselves as curriculum decision-makers, they experienced guilt for not following what they understood to be district guidelines.

Team Two: "We did what worked for us!"

This second team consists of three teachers who have taught fifth grade together for over ten years. Although none of these team members were involved with writing this social studies unit, one of the team members has actively participated on other writing teams in the district and therefore is quite familiar with the curriculum development process. We will see that this team's experience with social studies has similar beginnings as those experienced by Team One but we quickly find them collectively moving away from teacher as implementor of intended curriculum to redefining themselves using the metaphor "teachers as curriculum decision-makers."

Their encounter begins with many of the same frustrations with structure shared in Team One's story as evidenced in the following excerpt:

> At first we were a little hyper. Well, I remember tearing my hair out. I was thinking we have a new unit and it is so mammoth. And we have for so many years only done three big events and we could barely get that in. Thinking about adding more to it was a huge chunk. (Interview, B.R., #80-90) We were scared. (Interview, B.R., #116)

Another teacher adds:

> Yes, we would get a chapter and I can remember being overwhelmed. That is the way it went at the beginning of the year and we stuck by it pretty well at the beginning. I can still remember one time we made a list of everything we were suppose to do in one week and my student teacher looked at me and said how in the world can we do this in one week? (Interview, B.R., #398-406)

In response to these feelings of frustration, this group asked the curriculum specialist to meet with the team to discuss their concerns and clarify their role in implementing this curriculum:

> And once we talked with her and said, you know, we are a little frustrated here. She basically said, calm down, you're experienced teachers. And she kind of reassured us that we know what we are doing. And then she came up with the idea, why don't you pick and choose? Then she said that she would like us to do as much as we can from the unit just to give feedback on it and evaluate it. And if you're feeling like it's not meeting the objectives, you have the freedom to go back to the tried and true things that meet the objectives. And not only that but she was very enthusiastic about us sharing new ideas with her. Don't feel badly doing something

different but then share it with her and maybe they could put it in the unit. (Interview, B.R., #102-112)

As indicated in this excerpt, the curriculum specialist encouraged the teachers to pick and choose and provide feedback to her about specific activities. Fullan (1992) discusses the importance of offering clarification as a central component of the change process.

At this point, the teachers decided to change their "mindset" toward the curriculum exemplifying a type of micro-politics working at the team level. These teachers, now determined to escape the imposing structure of the unit, began sifting through the unit to see the potential of the new curriculum. The potential curriculum is a concept discussed by Ben-Peretz (1990). Once these teachers collectively assumed the stance that potential curriculum is the starting point for their team's curriculum work, the teachers shared the following about their approach to the unit:

> I really like this unit now. I really enjoy it and I think that the possibilities are limited only by your own imagination and creativity. You can do anything. Just about anything could be tied into this at some point in the year. (Interview, B.E., #130-134)

By assuming this new stance toward their role in the implementation process, these teachers were able to disregard activities and materials they felt wouldn't work for their students and move forward to extend, create, and connect the curriculum to their students. For example, the teachers discussed not using certain books that were too difficult for some groups of children and not incorporating activities that they felt overlapped with other activities. Additionally, the teachers also discussed how they adjusted the timing and strategies of the unit based on their understanding of what would work well for children:

> You know in the last chapter, we met the objectives but we all did it differently. Then we are going to compare and see how it is going. We even tried to adapt some of the old simulation things we did and make it mesh with the unit because the kids really like that. (Interview, B.R., #9-15)

As another example:

> The Civil War was tough. We used a lot of our old stuff. We talked to the curriculum specialist about that and she is having new activities submitted into it. There were battles, battles, battles. We usually spend more time on how everything put together builds up to the Civil War. What causes were behind it. We don't usually take 20 or 30 battles and go over them. The focus in this unit was the battles and our focus is why did we have a Civil War. (Interview, B.R., #14-22)

The thinking behind this excerpt makes explicit the teachers' beliefs about what is appropriate content for the children in their rooms. After recognizing the incongruencies between their team's belief systems and the unit's approach, the teachers worked together to implement an adapted form of the curriculum. These teachers no longer felt their role as curriculum decision-maker was bound to the instructional strategies as explicated day-by-day in the six chapters of the curriculum guide. In fact, these teachers seemed to have forgotten the organizational structures that originally challenged their role of teacher as curriculum decision-maker. They began using the curriculum when they saw its potential and not using it when they knew of a "better way" to teach the material.

What differs between Team One and Team Two is how they reacted as a team to their frustrations with the curriculum. These uniquely different responses reflect the

micro-politics of the teams working within the district. According to Hoyle (1982), micro-politics describe "those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (p.88). Team One did not employ strategies to assert itself but Team Two recognized their collective power to voice their concerns and make curriculum decisions as a team. Their strength grew out of their collective voice and ultimately had a substantial influence on the freedom they felt as they implemented the unit.

Team Three: "We think it works as written!"

This third team consisted of teachers who had more experience with this unit than the other teams. In fact, one of the team members helped write the unit and another team member piloted the unit the previous school year. However, each of these teachers was relatively new to the district. From the beginning of this interview it became clear that these teachers were not currently experiencing difficulty implementing the unit but there was some indication that during the piloting year difficulties existed for the teachers who were not on the curriculum writing team:

> It was a lot easier for me this year. Last year during the prepiloting I was feeling a lot of pressure to keep up with the group that was prepiloting it. We would get together and meet to talk about it once a month. Some months I would be about two weeks behind everybody. Somebody else would be three weeks ahead. Then you would be feeling all this pressure and I think it was part of me wanting to do every single thing in there and not able to, like this year, I picked what I felt I wanted. In your second

year, you know that a lot of activities really overlap. (Interview, B.F., #112-119)

Many of these feelings, experienced by these teachers in the piloting phase of development, are the same feelings relating to structure expressed by each of the other teams during their first year of implementation. When these teachers were asked how they eased this pressure, the following response was given:

> I had to make a decision and I talked to the curriculum specialist about this too. Do I want to try all this stuff just to say I made it through it all or do I want to make sure these kids can learn and take something away from this? So the question is do I do it all or do the job well? (Interview, B.F., #125-130)

In these comments, this teacher is bringing us back to the metaphors of teacher as implementor of intended curriculum or teachers as curriculum decision maker by explicitly asking the question do I do it all or do I do it well? She wants to know what her role is as a teacher implementing this new unit.

After receiving clarification on her role from the curriculum specialist, and working through the initial implementation process during a pilot year, this teacher provides the following advice to others:

> You don't want to skip a big chunk. You don't want to skip the whole Indian Removal Act or the Stamp Act or the Boston Tea Party which were so important to understanding the constitution…You have to pace yourself I guess. I don't recall skipping any big chunks. That didn't bother me at all on the second time through. I felt the first time, oh no, something is wrong. So I talked to them about it and that is when they said, don't skip

> any big chunks. Like if you are still back on the Revolution and everyone else is at the end of the Civil War then you probably should be a bit worried that you are not keeping up. (Interview, B.F., #131-154)

Although this team expresses a belief in the fidelity-approach to covering the content of the unit, they also recognize the fact that the teacher will not be able to cover all of the instructional activities in the unit as evidenced in the following:

> You have to pick and choose and you have to look about a week ahead of time. So you have it planned out in your mind what you want to do. And something that is different this year than last year was it could really be tailored to the type of class you have. (Interview, B.F., #30-37)

The other teacher adds:

> I just talked to the curriculum specialist about the concepts because some of them were really hard for my kids this year to grasp the ideas behind them. And it was pretty high level but last year they didn't have a problem. So I think that you have to pick and choose the best vehicle to get the content to the kids. They have now rewritten some of those activities as enrichment activities. So if you have a class that you feel will benefit from doing this then you could do that or not do it at all or do it just for a select group. (Interview, B.F., #72-82)

Indeed, most of this interview was spent highlighting problems of the past and offering advice for others who are learning the unit today. By the time this interview took place, these teachers felt comfortable with the congruency between their beliefs and the unit's content, their role, and the structure of the unit. Interestingly unlike the other two teams, this team assumed a fidelity approach to the content and activities of the unit and overall

did less questioning of the congruency between their beliefs about how children learn and the implicit beliefs that underlie this social studies unit. Some evidence suggests two plausible explanations for their acceptance. First, this may be because they were less experienced teachers who did not have to change deeply existing practices but rather embrace new and greatly needed resources. Second, these teachers were highly involved in the writing, development, and piloting of the unit.

Conclusions

Three interwoven threads or assertions connect these three stories of teacher-team curriculum implementation. A first assertion suggests that curriculum leaders must acknowledge, explore, and shape the implementation process in ways that are consistent with the teacher teams' beliefs about their role as curriculum implementors or decision makers. This process must occur before the implementation process begins since congruency between the teacher teams' existing beliefs about their role in curriculum implementation and the way they felt the curriculum is implemented are connected. This finding relates to the ethic of practicality discussed by Ponder and Doyle (1977) which views teachers as decision makers who make decisions about changes or innovations in terms of the degree to which the proposal is congruent with their perceptions of the situation. Across the three groups, the teams were initially given the message that they should implement the curriculum as written which in two of the three cases was not congruent with the teachers' beliefs.

A second and related assertion suggests that curriculum leaders must acknowledge and explore existing teacher beliefs about effective instruction before implementation begins. In this study, two of the three teams of teachers frequently struggled with

instructional strategies that were included in the unit and felt that the unit's contents were often not consistent with their own beliefs about teaching and learning. This study also suggests that congruency is needed between the new curriculum and the teaching teams' beliefs about appropriate curriculum content. Conversations directed at understanding congruency and incongruency at the team and teacher level are necessary for authentic curricula change. Thus, in order for curriculum change to occur each and every classroom teacher must be defined and valued as both a curriculum implementor and a legitimate curriculum deliberator. This notion of teachers as curriculum deliberator extends Schwab's notion of teacher involvement in group deliberation and raises the question of what is the role of teams of classroom teachers or even individual classroom teachers in the deliberation process.

A third assertion suggests that curriculum leaders must acknowledge the power that team membership has on the curriculum implementation process. What is gleaned from this study is that the structures used to encourage a fidelity approach to implementation heightened frustration but did not ultimately insure fidelity in the way the teams implemented the curriculum. In actuality, the elements imposed by the structure accelerated teacher team dissatisfaction with the curriculum. Through the structural elements these teachers were given messages that contradicted their current definition of themselves as curriculum decision makers resulting in role conflict. Thus, the structure did not encourage fidelity. The use of structure to "control" the teachers' curriculum implementation and the teachers' collective reaction to the imposed structure also highlights the important role of micro-politics in team teaching and curriculum implementation. In fact, as the teams became frustrated they found ways to support each

other and adjusted the curriculum in ways that were more congruent with their collective beliefs.

Each of these three assertions center around the argument that more attention should be given to the structures used to organize curriculum implementations, to define the teacher's role in the implementation process, and to understand the teachers' existing beliefs about both their role as curriculum implementors as well as their personal practical knowledge about the types of curriculum that should be implemented. This study indicates that the ultimate determinant of what will occur in the classroom relates to what the teachers' collective beliefs within the teaching team are about teaching as well as how the teachers collectively understand their role as curriculum implementors. Each of these stories began with the teachers' need for clarification and exploration regarding many aspects of the curriculum. However, frustration decreased substantially as the three teams gained experience with the unit, asked questions of the developers, and redefined their role in implementation in ways more congruent with their beliefs.

What is learned from these three cases is that teams of teachers eventually "learned" how to implement the unit through their internal debate, deliberation, and choice informally engaged in at the team level as each team searched for congruency between the new curriculum and their own beliefs. Their struggle suggests that curriculum leaders involved in implementing a new curriculum should use a "team-centered" approach. A team-centered approach would encourage an open, dynamic discussion regarding structures, roles, and beliefs that impact the teachers' decision making process. Additionally, this study suggests that more attention should also be given to "teacher-centeredness" as a critical aspect of authentic implementation. The curriculum implementation process must not solely focus on student learning but also

emphasize and value the teachers' "learning" of the curriculum. This "learning" should include teachers' learning to know the curriculum through the process of authentic debate, deliberation, and choice. This differs from our traditional notions of "piloting curriculum" which typically focuses solely on whether the activities result in student learning. A teacher and team centered approach follows Hameyer's (1986) argument that the early phase of the implementation process should begin with a learning by trying it out approach which provides occasions for the user to practice the new tentatively, to recognize important implications, and to contribute personally in a way which is not totally anticipated. Hameyer suggests that using this approach effective learning about the new would be facilitated.

This research indicates that during the initiation phase of implementation a "learning model" rather than a "telling model" would better serve teachers, students, and curriculum. In fact, this "learning model" might center on the teacher team's concerns about structure, roles, and beliefs as they actively and authentically engage in the activities of curriculum debate, deliberation, and choice. Drawing on a Concerns Based Adoption Model (Loucks-Horsley & Stiegelbauer, 1991) as curriculum is being developed and implemented could facilitate the change process. By supporting teachers in this learning mode, curriculum leaders, and administrators can engage the teachers in collaborative dialogue rather than private frustration about the what, when, how, and why of the curriculum, its structures, their beliefs, and their roles as curriculum decision makers.

Understanding the role of the teaching team and the importance of their participation in debate, deliberation, and choice can be problematic to many curriculum leaders and those who wish to establish equity often actualized in "sameness" across

districts and states by standardizing instruction. In many districts, there has been a movement to insure that curriculum looks the same as it is played out in all classrooms across all schools. In fact, in many situations whether by adopting a new textbook series or creating district "homemade" textbooks, an effort is being made to teacher-proof curriculum. Participation by teacher teams in debate, deliberation, and choice will result in the implementation of curriculum that will most likely not look the same across contexts. How will administrators, central office staff, and curriculum specialists deal with the individuality each team demonstrates as a result of their debate, deliberation, and choice? Does this individuality pose a problem to those desiring sameness or can this individuality be nurtured in ways that allow each group to authentically but uniquely implement the curricular goals? Why does equity have to be interpreted as sameness by district personnel? Shouldn't the people who work closest to children have a significant voice in the way instruction is carried out? How can the concept of teacher teams be used as an effective vehicle for debate, deliberation, and choice?

In future studies greater attention needs to be given to the context of the school, including the ecology of the team, the beliefs of the teachers, and the actions of the leadership during curriculum implementation. What is missing from this study is thick description of the context and culture of each school where these stories are played out and a more detailed portrait of the administrative and curriculum leadership. In fact, in order to gain a deeper appreciation for these stories, this work could well be augmented and further contextualized by parallel stories told by administrators and curriculum leaders. As school structures are increasingly created to support collegial and collaborative interaction between teachers, the need to understand how teams of teachers work together and influence each other as they implement curriculum will become

essential. Simultaneously, curriculum leadership must find ways to tap into and utilize the personal practical knowledge that shape the beliefs of teams of teachers and then provide these teachers with the authentic space and support to debate, deliberate, and choose.

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Table 1: Three Factors Impacting on Teacher-Curriculum Encounter

	Team One	Team Two	Team Three
Impact of Unit **Structure**	9	3	2
Activities Conflict with teacher **beliefs**	8	4	2
Teacher's **role** to pick and choose.	0	8	5

Numbers indicate the frequency of times these themes were mentioned during interviews.